NEW Leadership™ Texas is an intensive, six-day, non-partisan residential program that gives college women the knowledge and skills to become effective leaders in politics, public policy, and public service. This program, sponsored by UT's Center for Women's & Gender Studies, is held every summer on The University of Texas at Austin campus.

This year, 37 women attended from 27 universities and colleges: Austin Community College, Baylor University, Brookhaven College, Collin College, Hofstra University, Huston-Tillotson University, Lamar University, McMurry University, Prairie View A & M University, Rice University, San Jacinto Community College, St. Edward’s University, St. Mary’s University, Texas Woman's University, Trinity University, University of Houston, University of Houston at Clear Lake, University of Houston Downtown, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, University of North Texas, University of Texas (Arlington, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, San Antonio, Tyler, Rio Grande University).

NEW Leadership™ Texas brings together a diverse group of women from across the state to discuss the roles of women in leadership and politics, meet successful women leaders, and develop their leadership skills.

Faculty in Residence (FIRs)

The students benefit from the experience of our faculty-in-residence, three women public leaders who serve as mentors for students throughout their stay. Our 2017 FIRs:

- T. Dean Adams, Write Your Life as a Woman,
- Jacquie Baly, BalyProjects
- Jehmu Greene, Fox News Political Analyst
Rachel Woods, President, Leadership Trek Corp. taught us that in politics, it is most common to expect to have conflict with members of opposing political parties. However, often people within the same political party or organization will experience conflict as well. She walked us through an exercise that showed how to negotiate so that everyone wins.

Susan Billmaier, Program Officer, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation facilitated an interactive team-building session that will help identify and understand our personal leadership style through assessment and exercises. We will be able to use this information to better understand ourselves as leaders and interact more effectively with others.

Emily Einsohn, Program Director at the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Engagement, presented a workshop to help increase civic participation in Texas and the country. We learned that Texas residents are ranked 49th for contacting elected officials, 44th for discussing politics a few times a week, and 51st for voter turnout. We learned some of the reasons for this as well as some solutions to work on.
Keynote Address - Wendy Davis

Wendy Davis is the founder of Deeds Not Words, an advocacy initiative that empowers millennial women to channel their passion and energy on issues of gender equality into actionable change. She was previously a Texas state senator and candidate for governor of Texas, who fought tirelessly for reproductive rights, equal pay for women, justice for sexual assault survivors, affordable quality education and equality for the LGBTQ community.

Wendy’s public service career spans 3 decades, serving as a Fort Worth city councilperson for 9 years prior to her election to the Texas State Senate. From very humble beginnings, Wendy worked as a single parent to forge a path to college, beginning at community college, earning a scholarship to Texas Christian University where she graduated first in her class, and ultimately graduating with honors from Harvard Law School.

Widely recognized as a leader on women’s equality, Wendy is best known for her historic 13 hour filibuster on the floor of the Texas Senate to kill a legislative effort aimed at dramatically reducing women’s access to abortion care in her state. Her efforts were vindicated with the Supreme Court’s recent ruling in Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt which overturned Texas’ anti-abortion law.

Though she was unsuccessful in her bid to become Texas’ first Democratic governor in 20 years, Wendy shattered records in both fundraising and volunteer recruitment. With over $43 million raised in her gubernatorial race, Wendy is most proud of the fact that the average donation to her race was only $103, with over 183,000 unique contributors from all over the country supporting her election. In addition to raising an extraordinary amount of money during her campaign, Wendy also energized a record number of over 34,000 active volunteers, and built a social media following of over 550,000 Facebook followers and over 180,000 Twitter followers, who continue to follow her work today.

Noted for her talents as a legislative leader, in 2009 Wendy was named the Texas Legislature’s Rookie of the Year by Texas Monthly magazine and Freshman of the Year by AARP, was named to Texas Monthly’s Top Ten Best Legislators in 2013 and has received numerous awards, including the 2013 Women Who Dared award by the National Council of Jewish Women, the 2013 Champion for Social Change award by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and the 2011 Legislative Star by the Texas Classroom Teachers Association.

Despite her well known work fighting for the opportunity for all Texans to realize their potential through education, employment and healthcare, Wendy is most proud of her role as mother to her daughters Amber (33) and Dru (27) and “Bubbie” to her new granddaughter, Ellis. Wendy resides and offices in Austin, Texas.
Austin City Hall and the Texas State Capitol

At Austin City Hall, the students enjoyed a tour of the building before taking a short bus ride to the Mexican American Cultural Center for a panel discussion with several women in local government leadership.

Members of the panel were:
- Moderator: City Council Member/ Mayor Pro Tem, Kathie Tovo;
- Deborah Thomas, Deputy City Attorney;
- Veronica Lara, Director of Small & Minority Business Resource
- Elaina Ball, VP for Power Production at Austin Energy.
- Julia Joseph, Financial Manager, Austin Convention Center
- Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager, City of Austin
- Joya Hayes, Director of Human Resources

After lunch at Scholz Garten, we traveled to the Texas State Capitol where the students were given the Women in Texas Politics Tour. During the day at the capitol, we met with Senator Dawn Buckingham, Representative Donna Howard and several capitol staffers.
Political Action Project: SB 3 - School Choice

NEW Leadership Texas allows participants to do more than just learn about politics; they get to dive in. For the political action project, students work in small groups to research an issue throughout the week and make presentations aimed at influencing public policy.

For this exercise, each individual was assigned a particular position/role on the issue. Many were assigned to a group that takes a position or approach that she would not take in “real life”. This is a learning exercise and it is important, especially in politics, to understand the perspectives and strategies of our opposition. For the purposes of the Political Action Project, we used a modified and edited version of the SB 3 to narrow the focus of the discussion. The culmination of all their hard work is the mock senate hearing on the last day.
Another Great Year!

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